



# Running into summer

Schools dishing out fun to contain  
kids' anticipatory energy

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
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Ross Hudson, a second-grade student at Stuart Mesa Elementary School, participates in the tricycle race. He was assisted by one of more than a dozen volunteers who helped the kids enjoy their day.

School's almost out — and the little cherubs are restless. So local schools are shifting gears to transition kids away from conventional learning and let them blow off steam so it doesn't boil over in anticipation of a long-awaited, extended vacation. The schools are treating children to tons of fun activities to hold them over and keep behavioral problems in check. The fun and games also are designed to reward the kids after a long year of learning. Toward the last week or two of school, the year begins to wind down, said Todd C. McAteer, a San Diego resident and principal at Stuart Mesa Elementary School. According to McAteer, by this time of year, all the testing has been done, and the learning process is cooling off. His most time-consuming task now — signing stacks of report cards. Otherwise, McAteer and his staff spend the school year's

waning days on activities intended to keep kids' minds off summer vacation. Every year, he plays sports with graduating fifth-graders. This year, they enjoyed a game of softball. "This is about the last time some of these kids will be together. I asked the kids, 'Who is going to be moving at the end of the school year?' and about a third raised their hands." A field meet Monday at the school was especially important for the fifth-graders since they move on to middle school next year and leave Stuart Mesa behind. More than a dozen volunteers helped run this year's annual field meet. Both parents and Marines without children showed up to help run the many stations of fun — including tug-o-war, sidewalk art, skateboard races, dizzy izzy and many other activities throughout the daylong event. Those events augment other fun outings, including graduations, obstacle course challenges and year-end parties. Everyone involved — from parents to principals — has their own way of getting children ready for the long vacation. "I always get them books from the next grade up and teach them over the summer," said Yong Daniel,



A student at Stuart Mesa Elementary School fails to balance a cup of water on her forehead. Stuart Mesa held its annual field meet Monday, a day filled with games and playful competitions.

a parent volunteer whose child attends Stuart Mesa Elementary. "I want to make sure they always have a heads-up."



Diamonte Ureste, a second-grade student at Stuart Mesa Elementary School, balances a pingpong ball on top of a tennis racket — one of nearly a dozen events students participated in during the field meet.